project in 1977 and is now in full operation. Working on a basis of discussion between the victim, the offender, and the community, the project is designed to offer an alternative to existing dispositions such as arrest and sentencing, at both the pre-charge and post-charge stages for selected charges. Its aim is to involve the community in the diversion process.

With the aid of the diversion worker and a screening committee from the community, a diversion program is worked out for each offender. This project serves both Natives and non-Natives.

HOW WAS N.C.S.A. STARTED?

The Native Counselling Services of Alberta developed from the Courtwork program offered by the Canadian Native Friendship Centre in Edmonton.

The initial courtwork program in Western Canada originated at the Winnipeg Friendship Centre in the early 1960's.

The Canadian Native Friendship Centre in Edmonton officially opened in 1963 in an attempt to meet the social, recreational and cultural needs of people in the city, whether they were permanent residents, new comers or transients.

One constant problem encountered by the Centre was Native people appearing in Criminal Court. Distinct communication problems were evident in most cases: (a) frequently a language barrier existed, (b) unfamiliarity with court procedures, (c) inability to pay fines, (d) reluctance to speak up for oneself, (e) lack of knowledge of agencies to turn to for assistance and guidance, (f) confusion about the law, and (g) confusion about Native rights.

As the Centre became established it expanded its scope of operations in the hopes of better attaining its goals and meeting the various needs of Native people. As a result of this expansion, the Centre made provision for certain staff members to familiarize themselves with the problems faced by Natives in court as well as the operations of the Criminal Justice System.

By 1964, the Courtworker was spending much of his time at the Municipal (now Provincial) Court Building, trying to ensure that the Native accused was fully aware of the charges, possible sentence and Court procedures such as making an election and plea and paying of fines. Other responsibilities accepted by the Courtworker included acting as interpreter, helping Native accused contact legal counsel, and referring people with special difficulties to the appropriate service agencies.

By 1969, Native people throughout Alberta recognized and accepted the idea and operation of the Edmonton Courtworker. His help was solicited from outside the city, however, he could not respond adequately due to his ties with the Friendship Centre.

In response to these requests, the Edmonton Courtworker left the Friendship Centre and formed the Native Courtworkers Services of Alberta in 1970. Three other courtworkers were hired for the northern part of the province. Administratively the Courtwork program became part of the Metis Association of Alberta.

Political and jurisdictional difficulties resulting from their formal ties with the Metis Association forced the Courtworkers to consider alternate forms of administering the program. With the support of the Metis and Indian Associations of Alberta, a provisional Board of Directors was established in 1970 to administer the Courtworkers program. The provisional board became a permanent one in 1971 and the same structure still exists at the present time.

In 1971, the Courtworkers Services expanded to include the Southern Alberta region. Also in 1971, the Native Courtworkers Services changed its name to the Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

N.C.S.A. has grown a great deal since 1971. Where in 1971 the focus of N.C.S.A. was mainly on criminal courtwork, it has expanded to include a variety of offshoots, such as the Diversion project and the Homemakers Program. N.C.S.A.'s staff has increased accordingly from 15 to over 90 at the present time.

HOW ARE STAFF MEMBERS CHOSEN FOR N.C.S.A.?

Staff members are chosen on the basis of personal stability, knowledge of English and a Native dialect, and willingness to co-operate with others involved in the Justice System. Most Courtworkers live in the same community they work in. While Native Counselling Services of Alberta has the final say in selecting its staff, close attention is paid to the recommendations of Band Councils, Metis locals, and other Native organizations. Most positions are advertised in the Native and non-Native media as they become vacant or new positions are created.

Administratively, Native Counselling Services of Alberta has an Executive Director, two Assistant Directors (one in the northern part of the province and the other in the south), area supervisors at the branch offices as well as one for the head office. The Legal Education program, the accountant, training co-ordinator, parole/liaison co-ordinator, workshop co-ordinator, researcher and other resource personnel work from the Edmonton head office.

SUMMARY:

The strength of Native Counselling Services of Alberta lies in its relationship with the Native communities and the agencies of the Justice system. The structure of the Board and the hiring policies for field staff ensures co-operation with, yet independence from, other Native organizations and Government agencies.

The key concept guiding N.C.S.A. in its relationship with the agencies of the Justice System is liaison. It is the policy of the staff to co-operate with the personnel and programs of the Justice System. Native Counselling Services of Alberta attempts to bridge whatever gaps may exist between the Justice System and Native people. In this way, it hopes to contribute to the achievement of the various goals of the Justice System as well as contributing to the development of a more complete understanding in the Justice System of the needs and concerns of the Native people.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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WHAT IS NATIVE COUNSELLING SERVICES OF ALBERTA?

Native Counselling Services of Alberta is an organization consisting mainly of people of Native ancestry. The primary function of N.C.S.A. is to assist Native people in conflict with the law prior to, during and following their appearance in court.

Native Counselling Services of Alberta is registered under the Societies Act of Alberta. It is non-political, non-sectarian, and it is not directly affiliated with other political and non-political Native organizations. N.C.S.A., however, supports and encourages the development of other Native organizations. N.C.S.A. is a non-profit organization. **THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR SERVICES.**

HOW IS N.C.S.A. GOVERNED?

Unlike other Native organizations, N.C.S.A. does not have elected board members. The N.C.S.A. board is selected from the general Native public throughout the province upon the recommendations of the Indian and Metis Associations of Alberta.

The seven member board consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer and four other members. The board is comprised of Status and Non-Status Indian and Metis people. There is no set term of office for the N.C.S.A. board, although the executive is elected for a one year term.

The main responsibility of the N.C.S.A. Board is to set operation procedures, policies and guidelines for the Society, such as terms and conditions of employment. It evaluates the effectiveness of existing programs, sanctions new programs and ensures N.C.S.A. is administered in an effective and efficient manner.

WHERE IS N.C.S.A. LOCATED?

The head office of Native Counselling Services of Alberta is in Edmonton, Alberta at 9912 - 106 Street. Branch offices are located in Brocket, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Gleichen, Grand Centre, Grande Prairie, High Level, High Prairie, Hobbema, Lac La Biche, Lethbridge, Morley, Peace River, Rocky Mountain House, Slave Lake, St. Paul, Standoff and Taber.

Courtworkers are located throughout the province on or near Indian Reserves, Metis colonies, and in areas where there is a large Native population.

WHO MAY SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM N.C.S.A.?

Although N.C.S.A. is organized to assist all Native (Treaty Indian and Metis) people, the spouse (husband or wife) or any of their dependents or anyone else who is having legal or personal difficulties may seek assistance and advice from N.C.S.A.

WHEN SHOULD A PERSON SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM N.C.S.A.?

The best time for a person to seek assistance from N.C.S.A. is immediately after they have been arrested or summoned to appear in court; or if they feel they have a question about their legal rights or if they want to lay charges or start legal proceedings against an individual or company.

WHAT SERVICES DOES N.C.S.A. OFFER?

The Services N.C.S.A. offers are varied and consist of the following:

CRIMINAL COURTWORKER:

The courtworker program occupies the central position in the development of Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

There are over 25 Criminal Courtworkers located throughout the province whose duties involve all aspects of the Criminal Justice System from the laying of charges, trial and sentencing procedures, to the post-sentence activities such as imprisonment, parole and ultimately the Native offender's release back into the community.

In addition, their duties include court attendance, appeal, information on the law, legal aid applications, appearing for others (when a legitimate reason is given), speaking to sentence, interpreting in Native dialects, interpreting and explaining court orders, documents and procedures, community inquiries and parole supervision.

The main concern of the program is to assist Native people in Alberta to develop a better understanding of their rights, interests, privileges and responsibilities in relation to the Justice System.

FAMILY COURTWORKER:

In 1974, the Law Foundation of Alberta provided Native Counselling Services of Alberta with "seed money" for one Courtworker to work in the Family and Juvenile Courts in Edmonton. The demand for more Family Courtworkers was so great that there are presently over 22 Courtworkers working in the Family and Juvenile Courts throughout the province. These courtworkers act as liaison between Native children and parents, Social Workers, and the Courts. They ensure Native people in the courts are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities as well as the procedures involved at each stage of the process.

The Family Courtworkers supervise Native juveniles on probation. They work with Native families to prevent the apprehension of children and assist in re-uniting Native families. The Family Courtworkers provide personal counselling, homemaking advice, and facilitate better communication between Native people and their Social Workers.

They also provide follow-ups for foster care placement and assist in juvenile programs in detention centres.

HOMEMAKERS PROGRAM:

The homemakers program began in 1976 as a pilot project in the Edmonton area. Its main objective is to keep Native families intact by assisting with children, housekeeping, budgeting, and counselling in the home. Many of the men and women who work as Homemakers are recruited from the ranks of former N.C.S.A. clients. Services provided by the Homemakers include:

1) providing housekeeping and child care for Native women who are unable to cope with their current situations and run the risk of losing their children due to neglect or inadequacy of care.
2) providing child care aid to assist a mother in adjusting to the return or possible return of her children from care.
3) providing encouragement to Native mothers to seek alternatives to their current way of life through such programs as Alcoholics Anonymous, Better Parenting, Adult Development Courses, Upgrading, Poundmakers or Henwood, Life Skills, etc.
4) acting as a liaison between the Social Worker and the client when there is difficulty in interpreting differences in lifestyle or culture.

Homemakers provide these services, on a fee-for-service basis, when requested to do so by a Family Courtworker or a Social Worker.

LIAISON OFFICERS:

As a result of the high proportion of Native inmates in most prisons, Native Counselling Services of Alberta entered into a contract in 1972 with the Canadian Penitentiary Service to provide services of a Liaison Officer at the Drumheller Institute. A similar contract was signed with the Alberta Correctional Services in 1972 for a Liaison Officer at the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institute. At the present time, there are Liaison Officers serving in the majority of the Federal and Provincial Institutions in the province.

The Liaison Officers act as contact and resource persons for Native people in the institutions, their families, friends and other Native organizations. The Liaison Officers help inmates obtain temporary absences, arrange transportation and counsel inmates. They sit on most classification and selection committees within the Institutions. The Liaison Officers work with the Native Brother/Sisterhoods and encourage Native inmate involvement in Institution and community programs.

PAROLE OFFICERS:

In 1970, the courtworkers began helping Native inmates formulate acceptable parole plans and assisting Parole Services Officers in the supervision of Native Parolees. This arrangement is now formalized into a fee-for-services contract with the National Parole Service to prepare Community Investigation reports, supervise inmates on Temporary Absence passes and to provide supervision and counselling to Native parolees. N.C.S.A. now has two full-time Parole Officers; one in Edmonton and the other in Calgary.

LEGAL EDUCATION:

For many years, the Courtworkers have been very active in organizing workshops where people from every part of the Justice System meet with Native people in Native communities to explain their duties. The workshops are designed to improve the understanding between Native people and the various parts of the Justice System.

In an attempt to make these workshops even more successful, Native Counselling Services of Alberta obtained funds from the Law Foundation in 1976 to produce a series of slide/sound shows to show in Native communities. The presentations deal with issues such as glue-sniffing, arrest procedures, child welfare matters, and Native alcoholism. In addition, the program will produce shows designed to sensitize the Justice System to the concerns of Native people and the problems faced by Natives in conflict with the law. These productions are available to the general public from the local Courtworkers.

BEAVER LAKE FORESTRY CAMP:

The Beaver Lake Camp, a minimum security camp near Lac La Biche, is designed to hold a maximum of 20 inmates from Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institution. Most inmates will have less than 3 months left on their sentences. The objective of the program is to provide men of primarily Native origin an alternative work and leisure program not readily available in conventional provincial institutions.

This is a joint venture of N.C.S.A. and the Solicitor General which began September, 1978. It is staffed by Native Camp Officers, not correctional officers. Working on normal incentive pay ($5.00/per day) the inmates will be involved in forestry work and community projects. The aim of the project is to prevent recidivism by involving the inmates in the community and using its resources, by providing counselling from N.C.S.A. and other social agencies, by teaching life and work skills and by aiding the inmate to find permanent employment on release.

THE HIGH LEVEL DIVERSION PROJECT:

The High Level Diversion project was begun as a pilot